



Li Bi Cu, M.D.

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ONE day there came into a Chinese home a little daughter. If she had been a boy she would have been welcomed and cared for—but alas! She was a girl, and there were two girls in the family already. What did they want of a third? So the baby, when only a day or two old, was thrown into the streets to die.

By good fortune she was found and taken to a mission school. There she was cared for and educated and, as she grew up, trained as a Bible woman. She married a Methodist minister, Mr. Li, and their first child, a daughter, was she whom we know as Li Bi Cu. The little girl's welcome was far different from that of her mother, for she came to a Christian home and was cherished and cared for. When she was old enough she was sent to the mission school at Hinghwa, and while there she was converted.

Recognizing in her unusual ability and the possibility of great future usefulness, one of the missionaries brought her to America for a more thorough education than could be obtained in China. For a time she studied at Folts Mission Institute, and later entered the Woman's Medical College at Philadelphia. Graduating with honor, she returned to China in 1905, after an eight years' residence in America, prepared to work among her own countrywomen.

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society had purchased ground for a hospital at Ngucheng, in the Fukien Province, and to that place Dr. Li was appointed. A native house, with capacity for a few beds and for a dispensary, was secured, and there she began her work.

At first no cases were brought to the new doctor until they were so low that it seemed as if nothing but a miracle could save them. The miracle was wrought in many cases, to the wonderment of the people, and it must be confessed, to the surprise of the doctor herself. She writes: "I am very thankful to God for his help, for I have been called to many cases that I had never seen in America." Before long the young doctor had all the work she could attend to.

In addition to the care of her patients, Dr. Li had to oversee the building and furnishing of the new hospital. In 1907 the building was dedicated to the service of the Christians' God for the healing of suffering women and children. The in-patients were removed to comfortable

quarters, the new dispensary was opened and the heart of the little Chinese doctor was made glad.

To the poor patients who come from their crowded, filthy, unsanitary homes, the clean, airy hospital seems a very heaven. Visitors say, "Just to live in these rooms is enough to make the sick ones well without any medicine." Dr. Li reports again and again, "They do not want to go home after they are cured." And who can wonder?

The doctor tells of one poor woman who was under treatment for two weeks and then sent home. After three days she came back, begging to be allowed to stay. She was a poor, lonely woman, dependent for her support on the kindness of relatives. The only room they could give her was one that she must share with pigs and cows. What wonder that she would rather die than go back to it in the intensely hot weather of a Chinese summer?

A very important part of Dr. Li's work has consisted in curing victims of the opium habit. Only those who have seen its ravages can understand what it means to other women in a non-Christian village when one woman comes back from the Christian hospital cured of the opium habit, with new ideas as to sanitation and home comfort, and best of all, with the love of Christ in her heart.

Whole families through faith in the Christian doctor's God, have brought their idols to be destroyed. Dr. Li says: "Many who came professed to be Christians, but when we questioned them concerning their faith in Christ we found that perhaps one member of the family attended church, or perhaps only a distant relative. You see how little they understand of what it really means to be a Christian!"

A bit from one of her letters seems to give a key to the doctor's cheery, helpful nature: "One experience has come to me that I am most thankful for. When I came home I could not play two hymns through. I have always been longing to be able to play, but had no opportunity. In my spare and lonely hours in the first year or two, I tried to play the hymns, and now I am able to play over two-thirds of our Chinese hymn book. The singing has been a great comfort to the patients."

Dr. Li has been closely confined to the hospital, because of the lack of competent helpers, but she has greatly enjoyed an occasional opportunity for country trips. At one time she examined ten day schools for

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the missionary in charge. She took one of her students with her and dispensed medicine in each place.

In her conference report in 1911, Dr. Li said: "We had a helper for a short time, and took the opportunity to dispense medicine at two places. In one place we treated nearly eight hundred patients in four days. When they found that we could not stay, they asked us to open a dispensary there, or at least to promise to go there once a month. The pastor tells us that the people have often been to him to ask him to write to us about coming again, but he knew we have no help, so did not write to trouble us. It is a lost opportunity, and we feel most sad about it."

In 1907 Dr. Li reported 270 in-patients, 2398 visits to the dispensary, with 1,029 return visits, 222 visits to homes and the total number of patients treated 3,919. In 1911 the report showed 365 in-patients, 5,985 visits to the dispensary, 557 patients seen in their homes and the total number of patients treated 6,898. The hospital is proving its right to exist, both by statistical results and by those other results that are unreported, but no less real.

Dr. Li was honored in 1912 by an appointment to represent Foochow Conference as lay delegate to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Minneapolis. Her father accompanied her as ministerial delegate from Hingwa Conference.

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